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Page 3 only

would never be able to spend

them, the supply situation of the Americans was notably better and not just with regard to tobacco.

This unexpectedly positive experience with the “class enemy” and “comrade in arms” was such an impressive display of camaraderie for the low ranking soldiers in particular that it went down in history as the “Spirit of the Elbe.” As it says on the trilingual bronze plaques at the memorial of Torgau, the spirit urges the peoples of all nations to resolve their differences by peaceful means and should serve as an eternal beacon to all nations.

Over the course of two days, the soldiers were allowed to visit and greet one another without any type of supervision, after which the commanders prohibited these exchanges. From then on, only registered and accompanied meetings were permitted. This was also true for the war correspondents on both sides in order to prevent spying.

hen Thau returned slightly injured to his hometown after the war he discovered that his entire family had been extinguished by members of the German security police. Nothing kept him from leaving. He left the Red Army behind and made his way to Salzburg, Austria. After spending a couple of years as a displaced person, he was able to immigrate to the United States with the help of a Jewish refugee organization and became an American citizen.

He moved to Milwaukee, married and raised a family - two sons and a daughter. He ran two auto repair shops, and every few years the local paper would do another anniversary story about the famous moment captured in the photo, Jeffrey Thau said. His father was very proud of his small role in history.

The moment captured in the photo lives on. The image was the basis for one of the bas-relief sculptures that are built into the National WWII Memorial in Washington D.C.

“(My father) lived the American dream and the country actually gave that to him,” Jeffrey Thau now says. “When he raised us he instilled two major points with us: One to get an education and make sure that you excel in whatever you can do and the other is to remain patriotic to our country.”